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Grigori FRID

COMPLETE MUSIC FOR VIOLA AND PIANO

VIOLA SONATA NO. 1, OP. 62

VIOLA SONATA NO. 2, OP. 78

SIX PIECES, OP. 68

Alexander VUSTIN

IN MEMORIAM GRIGORI FRID

Elena Artamonova, viola
Christopher Guild, piano

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

GRIGORI FRID IN MEMORIAM

by Elena Artamonova

Grigori Samuilovich Frid (1915–2012) was a versatile Soviet-Russian composer, best known outside Russia for his ‘mono-operas’ (that is, with a single vocal soloist) *The Diary of Anna Frank* (1969) and *The Letters of van Gogh* (1975), which deservedly received a degree of international recognition. But they form only a small part of Frid’s extensive legacy, which includes three symphonies (1939, 1955, 1964), overtures and suites for symphony orchestra, four instrumental concertos (for violin, trombone and two for viola), a vocal-instrumental cycle after Federico Garcia Lorca, *Poetry* (1973), numerous chamber works for piano, violin, viola, cello, flute, oboe, clarinet and trumpet, five string quartets (1936, 1947, 1949, 1957, 1977), two piano quintets (1981, 1985), music for folk instruments, vocal and choral music, incidental music for various theatre and radio productions, film scores and music for children. The majority of these works have been performed, but hardly any have been recorded.

From 1947 to 1963, Frid taught composition at the Moscow Conservatoire Music College. Among his students were the future composers Nikolai Korndorf, Maxim Dunaevsky, Alexandre Rabinovitch and Alexander Vustin.¹ Frid was also a gifted writer, publishing six books (two books of essays on music, a novel and three books of memoirs), and a talented artist. From 1967 he regularly exhibited his paintings, which now hang in private collections in the USA, Finland, Germany, Israel and Russia.

But even then the long and varied list of Frid’s accomplishments is not complete. For at least three generations of Muscovites, he is particularly well known as a tireless educator, as the presenter and one of the founding members of the *Moskovskii Molodezhnyi Muzykal’nyi Klub* (‘Moscow Musical Youth Club’) at the Composers’ Union (first of the USSR, and then of the Russian Federation) that Frid organised and led (with no financial reward) for almost half a century, from the day of its foundation on 21 October 1965 until his death. There have been 50 seasons of this club.² Especially in the Soviet era, these weekly lecture-concerts on Thursdays, from October until May, were very popular among music-lovers. They not only introduced the public to otherwise unknown contemporary music, including works by Schoenberg, Berg, Messiaen, Schnittke, Denisov, Penderecki, Gubaidulina and many others, but also presented various broad musical topics and, most importantly, allowed the

¹ Vustin, of whom more below, wrote two pieces in memory of Frid which are recorded here for the first time.

² A word of thanks goes to Alexander Vustin, who has continued Frid’s enterprise since his death.

audience to ask unprepared, spontaneous questions and discuss them. This latter initiative was a truly special achievement: the strict control of the authorities usually banned any gatherings that could provoke liberal debate.

The roots of Frid's broad interests and talents lay in his exceptional family circles and the harsh background he had to endure. He was born on 22 September 1915 in Petrograd into an artistic and musical family, in which music, theatre, literature and the other arts were essential elements of daily life. Frid's pianist mother, Raisa Grigorievna Ziskind-Frid (1882–1946), graduated with honours from the Imperial St Petersburg Conservatoire in 1912. She was Grigori's first, and for a long time his only, piano teacher. His father, Samuil Borisovich Frid (1884–1962), was a violinist, journalist, critic, writer, editor and the founder of one of the leading academic magazines, *Theatre and Music*, published every week in Moscow in 1922–23. The editorial office was situated in the family apartment, which became a place for regular visits from many renowned musicians, writers, poets and theatre producers, who were friends and colleagues of Frid's parents. In 1927, Samuil Frid was arrested, accused of counter-revolution (the real reason for his arrest is still unknown) and sentenced to Solovki, a dreadful prison and labour-camp on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea. Fortunately, five years later, he was freed and returned alive.

Largely due to his parents' domestic music-making and devotion, Frid's childhood memories, as he emphasised in conversation in April 2012,³ were filled with the music of Beethoven, Chopin, Mozart, Schumann, Tchaikovsky and other composers. His parents passed their love of music on to their two sons, despite the harsh realities of everyday life and its continuous shortage of income, its hunger, the purges and threat of Siberian exile, poor living conditions, the frequent resettlement of the family from city to city and the brutality of a succession of wars.⁴ Stalin's monstrous purges, in which some members of Frid's extended family lost their lives, the arrest of Samuil Frid and the fear of possible further repression forced Frid's mother to move with the children, to stay with relatives in Orel in August 1927. Because of the family's unsettled conditions, Grigori began systematic music lessons only in Orel, where he also studied the violin at the music school of the music college there. He appreciated his violin studies, but a career as a violinist did not appeal to him. In 1930 Samuil Frid was banished to Irkutsk, in Siberia, where the family was soon reunited.⁵ Grigori's knowledge of music was already compendious, thanks to his family, and Irkutsk became the place

³ Interview by the author in Frid's apartment in Moscow, 17 April 2012.

⁴ Frid and his family lived through the First World War, the February and Socialist Revolutions of 1917, the fierce Civil War of 1917–22 and the 'Great Patriotic War' (in Russia the Second World War – which for the Soviet Union began when Hitler launched 'Operation Barbarossa' on 22 June 1941 – is generally referred to as the 'Great Patriotic War').

⁵ At the end of a sentence in Stalin's labour-camps, the former prisoner had to settle in that harsh, isolated region, registering every day at a local office of the GPU/OGPU (the (Joint) State Political Directorate, a branch of the secret police). Sometimes a family would join

of rapid development for the young musician, who started to work to support the family. He was first hired as a decorator in a local printing house and in an operetta theatre, and then as a pianist in a local cinema, occasionally replacing his parents. Here he wrote his first substantial composition, a sonata for violin and piano, under the influence of Mendelssohn, and gradually determined that he would become a composer. Finally, in September 1932, the family was allowed to move back to Moscow.

Frid now entered the Moscow Conservatoire College (the equivalent of a sixth-form college), which since its foundation in 1891 had been directly connected with the Moscow Conservatoire itself, often sharing the same teaching staff. And so Frid studied composition under Genrikh Litinsky (a former student of Reinhold Glière), who concurrently held a professorship at the Conservatoire. In autumn 1935, thanks to his substantial progress and excellent exam results, Grigori was admitted directly to the third-year curriculum programme of the faculty of composition at the Moscow Conservatoire. He continued his studies under Litinsky and then, after Litinsky's dismissal from the Conservatoire in the 1937 purges, under Vissarion Shebalin.

The harsh social and political realities of the 1930s notwithstanding, Frid remembered his time at the Conservatoire with the special excitement that came from meeting many talented musicians and being at the centre of all important musical events. Frid became deeply influenced by Nikolai Zhilyaev (1881–1938), professor of composition at the Conservatoire, a man of astonishing erudition and knowledge, a former pupil of Sergei Taneyev and a close friend of Skryabin, Grieg, Shostakovich and Myaskovsky among others. It was at Zhilyaev's home, in May 1937, that Frid met Shostakovich, and their mutual respect lasted until Shostakovich's death.

In 1938, Frid and his classmate Vadim Gusakov, who was killed in the Great Patriotic War, founded the *Tvorcheskii kruzhok* ('Creative Club'), and they were soon joined by two pianist friends, Anatoli Vedernikov and Sviatoslav Richter. The objective of the club was to perform, introduce and discuss unknown and rarely performed works of Hindemith, Křenek, Ravel, Skryabin, Stravinsky and others, in a prototype of the *Muzykal'nyi Klub* Frid founded in 1965. The Creative Club, which ran for two years, was popular not only among students but also with the staff of the Conservatoire, in particular Heinrich Neuhaus (Genrikh Neigauss), whom Frid and his friends often visited at home. In 1939, Ivan Sollertinsky, a close friend of Shostakovich and professor at the Leningrad Conservatoire, gave an outstanding lecture on Mahler for the Club.

an ex-prisoner – though often families rejected any connection in an attempt to save themselves, even to the point of changing their surnames. (The fact that Frid's mother joined her husband with both children speaks volumes for her courage and her love.) Only after a given period (which varied) might ex-prisoners be given permission to move back to a city, even to the capital.

Frid graduated from the Conservatoire in 1939 with his four-movement First Symphony. Its monumental structure and epic style continued the tradition of Russian national symphonic music, using themes typical of Russian romances and folk traditions. It was premiered by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra under Grigori Stolyarov at the Bolshoi Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire in June 1939, receiving enthusiastic reviews from Mikhail Gnesin, Nikolai Myaskovsky, Dmitri Shostakovich and Mikhail Steinberg. Frid was awarded a diploma with honours and a place for continuation of his studies as a postgraduate. But the call to national military service in autumn 1939 and the war which followed thwarted his plans. He fought in the Red Army, as did his younger brother, Pavel, who in August 1942, aged twenty, was killed defending Leningrad. Both parents survived the devastating 872 days of the siege of Leningrad in 1941–44, in which at least 642,000 civilians lost their lives. These bitter memories were vivid for Frid even in his mid-nineties and without doubt were conducive to the formation of his personality. With the advent of peace in 1945, Frid was reinstated as a postgraduate at the Conservatoire by Shebalin. The success of the First Symphony paved the way for a number of state commissions for the radio and his long-lasting career in music.

Frid's musical language went through a series of remarkable transformations over the course of his long life. The music of Shostakovich and Stravinsky had a strong influence on him from his youth. Frid's memoirs contain interesting reminiscences about his personal contacts with Shostakovich, who spoke well of Frid's music, including his First Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 62; and among his friends at the Conservatoire Frid was regarded 'an apologist of Stravinsky'⁶ – sympathies he retained until his seventies. From the 1960s he began to show an interest in chamber or smaller forms and structures, even within the traditional genres of the symphony, opera and concerto.⁷ The music of the Second Viennese School, and of Schoenberg in particular, was also influential, but Frid was not a slave to its prescriptions: expanded tonality, chromaticism and atonality and serial and cluster techniques co-exist naturally in his mature works. Polystylism and a method of musical quotation and allusion of the sort used from the 1960s by Berio, Ligeti, Pousseur, Schnittke and Zimmermann bring a new kind of rhetoric to the incidental music Frid wrote for Racine's *Phèdre*.

As a musician brought up in Moscow, I had heard of the composer Grigori Frid for years and even played some of his piano pieces in the mid-1990s. Frid also knew of my research and performing activities. My particular association with Frid's viola music formed in the UK when, at the request of the composer,

⁶ Grigori Frid, *Dorogoi ranenoi pamiati* ('The Path of Injured Memory'), Muzizdat, Moscow, 2009, p. 132.

⁷ Examples are the three-movement Symphony No. 3 for string orchestra and timpani (1964), Concerto for Viola and Chamber Orchestra, Op. 52 (1965), the two mono-operas *The Diary of Anna Frank* for soprano and small symphony orchestra (1969) and *The Letters of van Gogh* for baritone and chamber ensemble (1975), and the Concerto for Viola, Piano and String Orchestra, Op. 73 (1981).

the pianist Nicholas Walker and I included the First Sonata for Viola and Piano in our final recital at the international festival and conference 'Russian and Soviet Music: Reappraisal and Rediscovery' in Durham in July 2011.⁸ Frid and I kept in touch and actively discussed this project to record his viola music, and he was very much looking forward to hearing the result. It was a privilege to know him and to exchange views on the many thought-provoking topics that now assist in the comprehension of his music. His lively and engaging character, his exceptional experience of life and the broad scope of his interests and different areas of expertise made him an incredibly knowledgeable and charismatic person.

All three of Frid's works for viola and piano point to his fondness for the deep, dark, mellow timbres that emphasise the tragic and tender mood of a theme or a motif. Frid told me himself how he came to composed for the viola:

It is difficult to say. It just happened that I started to write for the viola. I think it is its timbre. I am of the opinion that one should not write virtuoso works for the viola. I do not mean that one cannot play virtuoso works on the viola, but I simply think that one should approach the viola in a different way, compared to the violin. In a sense, the viola is inferior to the violin in technical possibilities in a particular diapason. It is not without reason that the repertoire for the violin and the cello in its quantity and range is more diverse. The viola's timbre is the most important. The viola is ideal for quiet and slow music. It is an instrument for reflection and contemplation.⁹

His first works for the viola, the Concerto for Viola and Chamber Orchestra, Op. 52, of 1965, and the **First Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 62**, from 1971, were dedicated to and premiered by Feodor Druzhinin, the violist of the Beethoven String Quartet and professor of viola at the Moscow Conservatoire.¹⁰ The brief First Sonata is in three movements, which are related to one another by their thematic material. The first movement, *Tranquillo e molto cantabile* [1], opens with a ten-bar solo from the muted viola. This elegiac, philosophical theme starts on the low E and immediately sweeps up to the high register and then back to the low E, where the piano joins the viola. The pitch E becomes a point of reference for both instruments throughout the movement. The special timbre of the mute in the viola part, as well as the crotchets in the piano suggesting a procession, emphasise the mournful qualities of the

⁸ I believe it was the British premiere: there do not seem to have been any earlier performances of the work on British soil.

⁹ Interview by the author with the composer at his apartment in Moscow, 17 April 2012.

¹⁰ Druzhinin recorded both works, the First Sonata with Mikhail Muntian, piano, on Melodiya LP S10-08249/50, released in 1976, and the Concerto with Mikhail Terian conducting the Chamber Orchestra of the Moscow Conservatoire, on Melodiya LP 33D-025045/6, released in 1969. The Sonata was also recorded by Igor Fedotov, viola, and Leonid Vechkhayzer, piano, on Naxos 8.572247, released in 2010.

music. Frid adds rhythmic and harmonic alterations to the theme, played in canon, using the high register of the viola until everything disappears in *pp* – a favourite Frid ending in these viola works. The fierce second movement, an *Allegro* [12], offers a stark contrast to the first. The virtuoso, grotesque, toccata-like writing in the piano part is in conflict with the intense, weeping melody of the viola. The viola theme from the opening of the Sonata unexpectedly appears at the end of the movement, but now *Allegro* and accompanied by the piano. It leads *attacca* to the third movement, *Lento* [13], which is a viola cadenza with occasional chords in the piano to support the lamenting but dramatic and relentless monologue of the viola. This movement has a free metre and episodes marked *rubato* and *ad libitum*. The mute returns in the coda, which recalls the anguish of the first movement; here Frid intensifies the feeling of emptiness and hopelessness. The melody reaches the highest register of the viola and after a few attempts ends on a quarter-tone between B flat and C flat (= B natural).

Frid's two other works for viola and piano, the Six Pieces and Second Sonata, both recorded here for the first time, exemplify his synthesising of the arts. They are virtually unknown, although they were published, in 1979 and 1989 respectively, by Sovetsky Kompozitor in Moscow.¹¹ Both works deal, directly and indirectly, with philosophical and moral questions of humanity, spiritual and physical suffering with considerable thoughtfulness and sensitivity.

Frid told me that the **Six Pieces for Viola and Piano, Op. 68**, were written in 1975 as 'sketches to the mono-opera *The Letters of van Gogh*' completed in the same year.¹² The opera is based on letters of Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo that contain descriptions of his spiritual, artistic and personal struggles and his feelings and beliefs, but the link between the two works is otherwise mentioned neither in the title nor in the score of the Six Pieces. Indeed, a good proportion of the musical material of the Pieces remained unique to this chamber work and was neither reused nor recycled in the opera, even though the relationship between the two works is recognisable from recurrent tunes and motifs. The Six Pieces are dedicated to Viktor Markovich Midler (1888–1979), a prominent artist, researcher and a senior curator at the Tre'tiakov State Gallery in Moscow, who had a profound influence on Frid's painting.

The repeated contrasting order of fast and slow movements, with second and fifth movements played *attacca*, combines with the miniature forms to approximate to the sketch character that Frid suggested: the two instruments constantly interrupt each other, and there is no continuous declamation, particularly in the fast movements. Rhythm, colour and timbre are distinct in both instrumental parts; tonal relations are of secondary importance. The subtexts – van Gogh's letters – may have had an influence on this

¹¹ They are now available from Sikorski Verlag.

¹² Interview, *loc. cit.*

compositional approach, but so did his growing proficiency as a visual artist: broader contrasts of colour and shade begin to prevail.

The first piece, *Moderato* [5], uses highly contrasted material with a special focus on augmented octaves, starting from E flat–E, that become something of an intervallic leitmotif. The melodious but dissonant piano introduction, played *quasi celesta*, is interrupted by knocking groups of semiquavers of the viola on the low E played *sul ponticello* supported by *secco* quavers in the piano. The instruments soon swap their material, and the viola now has the initial theme, slightly altered. Frid explores different colours and adds a mute and a harmonic on E that lead into the second piece, *Con moto (Moderato)* [6], a lamenting monologue of the muted viola in *mp–p–pp* dynamics that starts in the low register but quickly rises, supported by sustained chords of the piano on a pedal C. The high register of the viola is soon replaced by repeated harmonics until everything vanishes, as things often do in these viola works, on a low G flat. The third piece, *Allegretto* [7], is a scherzo with sarcastic, Shostakovich-like quavers in the piano that are dramatically interrupted by the viola. The use of pizzicato and tremolo, the reappearance of augmented octaves/minor ninths, the focus on dissonances and syncopation all intensify the dramatic mood. The fourth piece, an *Andantino* [8], is an intimate viola monologue that leads into a conversation with the piano, in which the pitch E becomes its point of reference. Its simple *cantabile* theme eventually dissolves on a harmonic on E. The fifth piece, *Allegro ma non troppo* [9], is a ferocious and merciless movement in 6/8 and 9/8. *Marcato secco* quavers, rapid change of dynamics, chromatic passages, dissonances (in particular major sevenths and minor ninths), pizzicato, *sul ponticello* and tremolo deepen the drama. The sixth piece, *Lento* [10], features a simple but heart-breaking melody which starts in the middle register of the muted viola and slowly develops to cover almost four octaves before dissolving *ppp* on F, with the piano supporting with sustained chords throughout. The viola solo starts and ends Frid's opera *The Letters of van Gogh* with this sorrowful and lamenting theme, which depicts the artist's loneliness and search for reconciliation, and the remorse and compassion that alleviate his long suffering before his imminent death.

Many writers and composers have tackled the Greek myth of Phaedra in plays, poems, operas or choral-orchestral works, among them Euripides, Jean Racine, Marina Tsvetaeva, Darius Milhaud, Benjamin Britten, John Tavener, Hans Werner Henze and Krzysztof Penderecki. In 1985 Frid was commissioned to write incidental music for a production of Racine's *Phèdre* by the stage-director Boris Lvov-Anokhin at the Maliy Theatre in Moscow, and in the same year he used the material in a Second Sonata for viola and piano and a piano quintet with solo viola, the two works together forming his Op. 78. In the myth Phaedra, the daughter of Minos, king of Crete, and wife of the hero Theseus, falls in

love with her step-son Hippolytus because the gods so will it. There are different versions of the tale, but they all end tragically: Phaedra commits suicide from guilt, and Hippolytus is either dragged to death by his horses, who are frightened by the god Poseidon, or is killed by his father, Theseus. Although Phaedra means 'bright' in Greek, the story conveys feelings of hopelessness and of a love that brings no happiness, of fervent passion acted out against a blue sky, of sin and repentance – diverse feelings which, strikingly, Frid manages to preserve in his Second Viola Sonata. The music is fused with polystylistic elements (jazz, theatre and the Baroque), with narrative and picturesque qualities, with irregular rhythm and *rubato* sections with free metre, and with timbre and dynamic colouring exploiting the entire registers of both instruments. Indeed, Frid lays considerable emphasis on multiple layers of textures and he often has the piano playing three or four lines simultaneously. The music is initially rooted in tonality but Frid readily departs from tonal relations with a consistently atonal technique, dissonance and frequent use of clusters: the harmony here is not functional but is used to bring colour and contrast. Frid's multi-dimensional approach is probably derived from his proficiency in the visual arts, and from the roots of this music in a theatre production and its related literary work, with their succeeding scenes and intermissions.

The first movement, an *Andante sostenuto* entitled 'Phaedra' [1], is written in ternary form (ABA) with a shortened recapitulation and suggests the central character. It seems to foreshadow her affection and repressed desires, her tragic story of love and transgression that lead to inner suffering and death. An increasingly despondent theme in C minor starts in the viola on a low *piano* C tied for five bars and very slowly develops in conjunct motion. Sombre but vibrant chords with split thirds in the piano on a pedal C darken the tragic atmosphere. The theme expands and gains new elements, but always returns to the low C. In the middle of the movement the piano takes the lead in a chorale-like section, which the viola sarcastically decorates with chromatic scalar passages in demisemiquavers. The theme returns in the recapitulation but soon ends in repeated *ppp* natural harmonics.

The *Andantino* second movement, 'Music in the Palace' [2], is written in an unconventional sonata form. It opens with a masterly Baroque stylisation in a quasi-quotation of the 'Serenata' from Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, itself a reworking of music attributed to Pergolesi: a D minor siciliana in 6/8 in a typical dancing rhythm. The piano part, marked *quasi cembalo*, is decorated with mordents and gradually thickens in texture. A second theme, also in D minor and with some elements derived from the first, moves away from the Baroque. The development section starts in G minor, but the initial theme becomes almost unrecognisable as Frid breaks it into short motifs and fragments and transforms the rhythm. Unexpectedly, a variant of the 'Phaedra' theme from the first movement appears on a C pedal point. The music becomes extremely chromatic and reaches a climax. The reprise brings back

the siciliana played in canon by the piano and the viola and, like quick changes of costume in a theatre, it modulates in sequences. The second theme returns in the dominant, A, and immediately breaks into fragments, followed by the opening motif of the siciliana, which is rendered unrecognisable with the use of polyrhythm and chromatic descending and ascending passages which disappear in *diminuendo*. A pedal point on D comes in the coda, where the piano has chords with split thirds. The viola part now begins to resemble a graphic score with free metre and high natural harmonics based on the D major triad that end this movement.

The third movement, 'Catharsis' [3], the dramatic centre of the work, is cast in a tripartite form, with two cadenzas at the beginning and another cadenza at the end of the movement that leads *attacca* into the finale. Frid employs different stylistic approaches to illustrate Phaedra's conflicting feelings, her inner struggle and the agonising search for forgiveness that lead to her suicide. Proportional tempi are an important structural element here, articulating contrast between sections and at the same time uniting their components. The gripping, Skryabinesque opening of the piano in 4/4, marked *Sostenuto assai e poco rubato*, covers six octaves, with bell-like ringing triplets and semiquavers at the top that start in *pp* and within four bars reach *ff*. It is followed by the dissonant, dramatic, lamenting viola cadenza in a free metre that ends *pp*. A short *Doppio movimento* introduction with wailing motifs is followed by a *cantabile* waltz in G minor, with cross-rhythms and ninth chords with split thirds that move away from the initial tonal centre to become clusters, with fragments of the bell-ringing from the piano opening. The piano solo starts a new section in 5/16 in D minor, but it quickly moves away from its tonal centre with incessant *ben marcato* passages (in recurring groupings of 2+3 3+2) and obvious jazz elements. The viola joins in, ferociously opposing the material in the piano part with irregular rhythm and syncopation. The drama intensifies as the viola and piano parts fragment, reaching its peak with constant changes of metre between 4/16, 5/16 and 6/16 and both instruments joining in this unstoppable *ff* fury. Another metrical change, to 4/4, brings lamenting chromatic intonations and, then in 3/4, *Tranquillo*, the reappearance of the waltz, now in C minor. The sudden return of the 'Phaedra' theme from the first movement, now in F minor, leads to the third viola cadenza, which starts from the compound minor second, emphasising the tragic order of events, and slowly develops with the support of a sustained ninth chord of the piano on the pedal C.

The final 'Epilogue' [4], written in a through-composed form, is a very short and exceptionally sad movement suggesting the pain and agony of the dying Phaedra. The mute on the viola and *p-pp* dynamics intensify the mood of this sombre scene. It starts *Doppio meno mosso* with the wailing motifs from the third movement played tutti. The theme that follows on a pedal A on the piano, *Tranquillo e molto sostenuto*, is based on descending short lamenting motifs that, like interrupted breathing, gradually form

a mournful melody, which leads again to the 'Phaedra' theme from the first movement. Lamenting motifs continuously interrupt this theme, played with double stops and harmonics. The final ninth chord with the split third on the pedal A in the piano and the natural harmonic on B flat in the highest register of the viola bring back the opening of the Sonata as if to encircle its tragic narrative.

Alexander Vustin (b. 1943) studied composition first under Grigori Frid at the Moscow Conservatoire Music College and then under Vladimir Fere at the Moscow Conservatoire, graduating in 1969. His interest in folklore led him to undertake research expeditions in the Ivanovo, Vladimir and Archangelsk regions of Russia in 1962 and 1977. He has been a member of the Composers' Union of the USSR (now of the Russian Federation) since 1974 and a member of the Association of Contemporary Music since 1990.¹³ *In Memoriam Grigori Frid* for viola and piano was written in 2014 especially for this CD. In Vustin's own words,

the viola was an iconic instrument in Frid's musical legacy, his voice. I associate the strong sound of the viola with the character of Frid, with the generosity of his soul. This work has two movements: 'Introduction' [14] and 'Farewell Song' [15].¹⁴

Vustin's musical language here is remarkably concentrated, with a depth of philosophical thought and sensitivity of expression. Long phrases and little fragments derived from them, as well as detailed attention to articulation and rhythm, are the main means of development, contrast and dramatic unity. Sound-colour and timbre, the feeling of space and time, narrative features and the conversational communication of both instruments are all very important for Vustin, who employs serial technique in his own individual way. The viola opens solo with a *p-pp-ppp* series, which becomes the basis of the entire work. Slightly altered, it reappears at the end of the second movement and thus frames both movements. Vustin freely explores the possibilities of both instruments in a search for unusual colouring and intimacy of expression.

¹³ Vustin's other compositions include *The Word* for an ensemble of woodwinds, brass and percussion (1975), *Memoria-2* for percussion, keyboards and strings (1978), *Homecoming*, on poems by Dmitri Shchedrovitsky, for voice and ensemble (1981), *Hommage à Beethoven* for percussion and orchestra (1984), *Festivity*, on texts from old Russian singing books for choir and orchestra (1987), *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit* for voice and ensemble (1988), the opera *The Devil in Love* after a novel by Jacques Cazotte (1989), *Heroic Lullaby* for ensemble (1991), *Agnus Dei* for choir, percussion and organ (1993), *Fantasia* for violin and orchestra (1996), *Praise to the Earth*, on poems by Olga Sedakova, for children's voices and chamber orchestra (1999), *Sine Nomine* for orchestra (2000), *Credo* for ensemble (2004), *Musical Sacrifice* for cello and piano (2007), *Canticum Canticorum* for voices and ensemble (2010), *The Wind*, on poems of Alexander Blok, for soloists, choir and ensemble (2012) and *Dedication* for cello, percussion and piano (2013).

¹⁴ Interview with Alexander Vustin at the Composers' Union of the Russian Federation, 17 August 2015.

Continuous interaction between vibrato and non vibrato, pizzicato and tremolo, *sul ponticello* and *sul tasto* techniques naturally co-exist with the broad use of the highest register of the viola along with artificial harmonics. Vustin makes an unusual use of wrapped mallets in the piano part at the end of the cycle that create a mysterious and irrational effect, gradually obscuring the boundary between earth and afterlife.

Violist and researcher, **Elena Artamonova**, holds a PhD in Performance Practice from Goldsmiths College, University of London, where she worked under the guidance of the late Alexander Ivashkin. Her work has been presented at many international conferences, and her Toccata Classics CDs of the first recordings of complete viola works by Alexander Grechaninov (rocc 0234) and Sergei Vasilenko (rocc 0127), the fruits of her archival investigations, have been well received. With a number of research publications worldwide on the history of the viola and its repertoire, Elena's academic profile is increasingly visible, and she has brought to light information about Russian-Soviet musical life that was not previously known either in Russia or the west.



Elena received her music education at the Gnessin Music College with Liudmila Vernigora in Moscow and at the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire with Yuri Bashmet, gaining her diplomas with distinction in 1993 and 1998. As a postgraduate, she continued her studies in London with Martin Outram of the Maggini Quartet, followed by tuition from Nobuko Imai in Amsterdam and Geneva, Tabea Zimmermann in Berlin and David Takeno in London. She has won several prizes, including the British Reserve String Prize, Michael Stucky Trust award, the Associateship of the Royal College of Music with Honours and Fellowship of the London College of Music, subsequently becoming Musician in Residence and Head of Strings at Rannoch School, Scotland, in 2000. Now based in Essex, as Musician in Residence at New Hall School, Elena enjoys a career as a performer, scholar and string coach.

An advocate for fascinating but often undiscovered and diverse repertoire for the viola from Marais and Friedrich Rust, Anton Rubinstein and Nikolai Roslavets to Graham Whettam and Alfred Schnittke, Elena has performed at prestigious concert venues and international festivals as a soloist, chamber-musician and viola leader in the UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Russia, the USA and South Korea.

The Scottish pianist **Christopher Guild** is in demand as a recital artist, concerto soloist and collaborative pianist, with concert engagements taking him to a wide range of venues across the UK. Performances have included those given at St James's Piccadilly, the Wigmore Hall and St John's, Smith Square, in London, as well as numerous recitals for music societies under the auspices of the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. Christopher's concerto appearances have seen him work with conductors such as Sián Edwards and the Milton Keynes City Orchestra in Bach's Keyboard Concerto in D minor, along with numerous amateur orchestras in concertos by Beethoven, Haydn, Schumann and Shostakovich. A strong advocate of contemporary and lesser-known repertoire, Christopher has recently begun surveys for Toccata Classics of the piano works of the Scottish composers Ronald Center (rocc 0179) and the late Ronald Stevenson (rocc 0272), who lived just long enough to take considerable cheer from the release of the first volume of his compositions.



As a chamber musician and ensemble musician, Christopher appeared as a Park Lane Group Young Artist at London's Purcell Room, and the Wigmore Hall, in 2012 with violinist Diana Galvydte. Their disc of twentieth-century Soviet, British and Italian violin and piano works was released on the Champs Hill label later that year. More recently, they were finalists in the Parkhouse Award 2013 at the Wigmore Hall. Christopher has also worked as an orchestral keyboardist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and City of London Sinfonia, appearing under the direction of conductors such as Vladimir Jurowski, Marin Alsop and Andreas Delfs.

Born in Elgin in 1986 and brought up on Speyside, Christopher Guild studied piano and violin locally before entering St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh, aged thirteen. He returned to Morayshire one year later to take top honours in the Moray Piano Competition – a victory which sees him as the youngest-ever winner to this day. He entered the Royal College of Music in 2005 as a Foundation Scholar, and remained there under the tutelage of Andrew Ball until 2011, successfully gaining a First Class BMus (Hons), and the MMus and Artist Diploma's with Distinction. Having recently completed his one-year tenure of the Richard Carne Junior Fellowship in Performance at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in 2013, he now combines an active concert and recording career with his extensive teaching work at the Godolphin School in Salisbury. Additionally, in the summer of 2015 he was appointed to Junior Trinity, the Saturday music school of Trinity Laban, as teacher of musicianship and piano.

His website can be found at www.christopherguild.co.uk.



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Piano technician: Andrew Giller

Viola: Yuri Malinovsky, Moscow, 1990

Piano: Steinway

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TOCC 0127



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